

My name is Amy Dudek and I am a registered voter in Norwich, CT. I am the Consumer Services Advocate, and a Community Resource Specialist for Aging and Disabilities, at my local Independent Living Center. I have worked at Disabilities Network of Eastern CT for 6 years now, assisting consumers with their independent living plan goals. I am advocating today on behalf of our consumers, to request additional funding for the five Independent Living Centers. I am most grateful for the generosity we have previously received to keep our ILC's running. Today I am requesting additional funding to ensure 2 new much-needed positions for each center, a Housing Coordinator and a Community Advocate.

The Housing Coordinator would truly be an asset to the Independent Living Centers because many of our consumers with disabilities are struggling to find affordable housing. Some of my consumers that I am working with, can't even provide me with their address because they are homeless/ have been evicted and are living on the street, in a shelter, or even in their car. One of my consumers I am currently working with, is living at a shelter. She has a spinal cord injury, and told me, the beds at the shelter are so uncomfortable, and because she is in such extreme pain already, she has been sleeping in her car. She also states, how overcrowded the shelter is. This situation should be avoidable without question.

A Community Advocate would be a wonderful strength to the Independent Living Centers as well. This position would help by assessing the community for people with disabilities to ensure their safety and independence in using sidewalks, for example, making sure necessary curb cuts are available, areas where accessible parking is needed, areas to ensure there are accessible bathroom facilities, and any other areas within the community that would pose difficulties. There definitely is a great need for both of these positions to be filled at the Independent Living Centers. I ask that you please consider providing each of the ILC's with additional funding to make this happen! Thank you very much for your consideration. When making your decision, remember how this will impact people within your community that have challenges and struggles they face with their disability every single day.